

Minutes of a meeting of the **ENVIRONMENT** Committee held at the Town Hall,
The Broadway, Crowborough on Tuesday 24th November 2015 at 7.30 pm

Present	Councillors	Margaret Brain Quentin Burch Peter Ellefsen Martyn Garrett David Larkin * Alan Penney Ronald Reed Heather Rogers Greg Rose Wendy Scrace Matthew Street Sandra Timms	Vice Chairman Chairman
Also present		John Coleman Cllr Richard Stogdon Cllr David Neeves Philippa Hewes David Foot Dan Colborne Susan Barnard	Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Comm. East Sussex County Council Crowborough Town Council Town Clerk Operations Manager Ranger Operations Administrator

* *Denotes non attendance*

APOLOGIES

Cllr David Larkin – personal reason.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Alan Penney declared a personal interest in the North Wealden Community Transport Partnership report as he is the Town Council representative to this group.

Cllr Martyn Garrett declared a prejudicial interest in the Strengthening Local Relationships Minutes as a resident of Millbrook Road.

MINUTES

Minutes – 29th September 2015

7588 **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2015 as confirmed be signed by the Chairman.

Matters Outstanding (including reports on updates)**Crowborough Cross Traffic Signals Improvement Scheme**

A further adjustment has been made to the timing of the traffic lights in order to prevent the build-up of traffic in London Road.

POLICE REPORT

A written report was circulated to Councillors from Sgt Mike Keeler, who had been unable to attend the meeting. He reported on the efforts being made by Sussex Police to cut costs up to 2020 whilst still retaining an effective service to the public. The number of PCSOs has recently been reduced and Sgt Keeler now supervises eight PCSOs covering a wide area. Crowborough Town and Withyham currently share PCSOs Marion Keeton and Paula Gatward and Crowborough also has the additional Town Council-funded PCSO, Chris Harrison.

The option for Town/Parish Council funded PCSOs will not be available from April 2016; parishes are being encouraged to consider providing community wardens.

RAILWAY REPORT

The Department for Transport (DfT) has appointed consultants to examine ways to improve the Brighton Main Line (BML) and to expand rail links between London and the South Coast. This would include reinstating the Lewes to Uckfield link and BML2. There is concern that the main London terminals do not have capacity to cope with future expansion.

Platform lengthening work at Crowborough station has been rescheduled for early January with the whole project scheduled for completion by July 2016. The refurbished trains should be available for service by next March. The temporary bus service is reported as working well but appears to be little used, with most people adjusting their times of travel or using alternative train lines.

HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORT**North Wealden Community Transport Partnership Limited report August-September 2015**

Wealdlink has recruited two additional drivers, and passenger numbers and fare income on the shopping service have continued to rise. Numbers using the supported scheduled bus services have also grown but most passengers are concessionary pass holders, resulting in little additional income for Wealdlink. The continuing shortfall in finances has prompted the Trustees to identify a number of strategies to increase the extent of operations and income, including a small rise in parish contributions.

Strengthening Local Relationships meeting 21st October

It was noted that for most projects to proceed match funding would be required, although the Highways Steward had raised tickets for a number of repair and relining jobs to go ahead. ESCC Highways is to supply a list of sites in Crowborough where double yellow lines have been requested by residents with a view to the Committee considering the possibility of prioritising and funding urgent work.

East Sussex County Council Local Transport Plan – Draft Implementation Plan 2016/17 – 2020/21

It was noted that this plan does not incorporate many new proposals specifically for Crowborough and that some have already been carried out. The Plan lists improvements to pedestrian access into the town centre and it was agreed that improving the available width of footways, particularly along Beacon Road, was a priority. The Plan is currently being consulted upon until 18th December and Councillors were encouraged to respond via www.eastsussex.gov.uk.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**Winter planting**

The winter planting has been completed, including planting the anniversary bed at Chapel Green to celebrate the centenary of the WI. Some of the larger bushes at Clokes Corner have been relocated.

East Sussex, South Downs and Brighton & Hove Waste and Minerals Sites

No sites in or near Crowborough are listed in the draft Waste and Minerals Sites Plan.

CROWBOROUGH'S NATURAL HABITATS**To review Ranger's report of tasks completed against Management Plans and other work**

The Ranger highlighted some of the key points in his written report. Pony grazing in the Ghyll has proved very efficient and has boosted community engagement. Motor cycling in the Ghyll continues to be problematic because it degrades the environment and is dangerous and anti-social. The installation of cycle barriers at main entry points is being considered.

In the Country Park there has been a large area of bank erosion which has caused an area of land to collapse. Further work is required to stem the erosion. Encroachment continues to be a problem and it is planned to install boundary markers. A recent planning application for development in Tollwood Road would impact the Country Park due to the loss of a wildlife corridor.

The proposed increase in the budget for the Bluebell Wood next year is to cover tree work due to the site being so extensively used.

Management Plans for the Ghyll, Country Park and Bluebell Wood are to be circulated to committee members.

8.34pm – the Ranger was thanked for his report and left the meeting.

FINANCE

Management Account Reports to 30th September and 31st October 2015

7589 **RESOLVED** to adopt the Management Account Reports to 30th September and 31st October 2015.

To review projected spend to the end of the financial year and Reserves

The projected spend and Reserves were reviewed. It was agreed that the Reserve for natural habitats should remain to cover future work.

To consider draft committee budget 2016/17

The draft budget was reviewed. It was agreed to include an item to cover potential funding for a community warden. It was agreed to submit the draft budget to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for consideration prior to agreement by the Full Council.

URGENT MATTERS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN FOR NOTING AND/OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA

None

The meeting closed at 8.48pm.

RAIL REPORT for the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING 24th NOVEMBER 2015 MEETINGS ATTENDED

Uckfield Railway Line Parishes Committee 11th November 2015

Southern were represented at the meeting, and apologised for some poor service days.

Unfortunately, the previous day had provided a particularly bad day of services on the Southern network. This was caused by a combination of events which included 2 train failures north of East Croydon and severe delays to Uckfield and East Grinstead trains at Woldingham due to poor rail conditions (leaves, heavy rain, and strong winds). The Network Rail rail-treatment train was not available.

The first 4 week period of no off-peak services on the line has started and the bus replacement services are reported as working quite well, but the very much longer journey times may deter all but the most determined travellers.

It was reported that the platform lengthening works had commenced at Edenbridge Town and Cowden and that these were on schedule. There has been a slight delay to the start at Eridge and that at Crowborough has been rescheduled for the early New Year. The whole project is still to be completed by July next year.

The necessary work is now in progress to get the additional trains into traffic.

They will become 2 and 4 car units, as per the existing fleet, and should be available by March 2016.

Committee representatives reported the substance of their meeting, the previous day, with the consultants appointed by the Department for Transport (DfT) to study and report on the Brighton Main Line (BML) and the future of rail links between London and the South Coast, both existing and proposed. The latter include, of course, the reinstatement of Lewes – Uckfield and BML2.

The study is required to assess future demand for capacity and to examine the various proposals that have been made to provide it, with a view to forming the best strategic plan for the future in the short, medium and long terms. The study will assess the proposals for their feasibility, and the priorities that each should be given. It is also required to establish where potential conflicts, if any, may exist between schemes and priorities and how these should best be resolved. In addition it must be determined to what extent the proposals might receive private sector funding. The study is to take account of future housing and commercial development.

The Committee's view of the need for re-doubling, electrification, re-instatement, and BML2 were given, together with the obvious need for further increases in capacity on the Uckfield Line required by the high demands of future development and the need to stimulate economic growth by producing better links to the Brighton, the South Coast towns and Tunbridge Wells and Kent.

The efficiencies and cost savings that should accrue to Network Rail and the Train Operator by the re-opened southern link, which are normally ignored, were pointed out.

The Wealden Line Campaign's BML2 project team has also made a presentation of the proposal to the DfT's consultant's study team.

The study is seen by the DfT to be urgent and is to be completed by Christmas. Its conclusions will obviously be very significant one way or another for the future of our line.

UNCONFIRMED UNTIL NEXT MEETING

OTHER

It has been observed that in addition to the platform lengthening works some major infrastructure renewals are under way along the line. These include at least four of the bridges between Eridge and Hurst Green. Additional works were previously advised in general terms, but their extent and number is not really known to me, (apart from those at Crowborough Tunnel in January 2016) but may be quite considerable.

It is reported that in addition to the concerns about the challenging nature of the 2018 timetable there are now worries about the abilities of the various London stations and termini to provide the required capacity needs. If correct, then it would appear that there is an even stronger case to be made for BML2 which provides the south with additional station capacity in south-east and east London.

J N Coleman 16th November 2015